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THE MONIST

SCHOPENHAUER'S TYPE OF IDEALISM.

MY object in this paper is to bring out Schopenhauer's view of the nature of the world of objects. Suppose that the reader and I are in a university lecture room, what, we may ask, are the desk, the seats, the floor, the walls and our own persons as visible objects to one another? According to Schopenhauer's analysis they are really our sensations—which, however, we combine and separate, order and arrange, and so make into the distinct objects before us. The desk means a certain color, a certain hardness and smoothness—its outline or form being the spatial line or lines where these sensations cease. The total ordered group of sensations we call the desk. It is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, with all the objects in the room—even with our own persons: one hardness, color or combination of colors, form and outline is a seat, another the floor, another you, another I and so on.

How then do these objects exist? If they are fundamentally our sensations, are they really independent of us, as in our ordinary mood we think? Are they not rather our experience—one experience (or set of experiences) being localized here, another there and so on?

Suppose, however, we were not on hand, and the experience did not exist, what then? Would the objects be non-existent? Of course, *ex hypothesi*, our persons would not be here, but how about the desk, the seats, floor and

walls? Would they be non-existent? This, perhaps in unduly simple form, is the question of idealism or realism. If one believes that the desk with its color, hardness and outline would exist just as truly with nobody at hand to experience it as it does with ourselves present, he is a realist. If, on the other hand, he holds that it would not exist under such circumstances, that it is real only in the experience of you or me or somebody like us, he is an idealist. Even if the realist concedes that some of the properties of the desk (its color, for instance, or its hardness) are only our experience, while still maintaining that something there, however indefinable, exists independently, he is none the less a realist (though what may be called a critical one). And the idealist who, while asserting the experiential nature of all objects, admits that something must be there which gives rise to or occasions our experience (itself being independent of experience), is no longer an absolute, but a critical idealist. In fact, the critical realist and critical idealist may not radically disagree, their opposed names being simply descriptive of the contrasted points of view from which they set out. But an absolute realist and an absolute idealist are antithetical to each other. Yes, a critical realist and an absolute idealist are radically opposed—and, for that matter, a critical idealist and an absolute idealist, since to the absolute idealist anything at all outside experience, even if it be an x or a question mark, anything non-mental whatsoever, is unreal and absurd.

Now Schopenhauer is an idealist to start with (whether an absolute one, we shall see later); he belongs in general in the idealistic camp. Objects exist to his mind in relation to a subject, not outside. Sensation itself, he says, is a poor thing; and something more than sensibility, namely, the intellect or understanding, is needed to build up the world and construct all the definite objects in time and

space that we see. Yet there are no other elements to build with, no other construction-material, than what sensation gives us—and sensation apart from a sentient subject, something that has sensation, is a thing in the air, impossible and unmeaning. Yes, that process of grouping and locating in a definite space and time which turns the confused mass of sensations into recognizable objects—this does not make them any more things really independent of us. The mind groups them and they are grouped to the mind; the mind locates them and they are located to the mind. Even when they are connected according to the law of causality, it is the mind that connects them and they are connected to the mind. In other words, the whole being of objects, their sensational substance, and the form we give them, is relative to ourselves. This, of course, is not saying that the desk, the seats, the walls here *do not exist outside our bodies*. Our bodies are objects like any other objects; they are made up of sensations and the form which the mind gives them, just as the table or the seats are; and just as the desk is separate from the seats, so is my body separate from yours. The desk is here when my body is out of doors, and when my body is gone absolutely, that of my readers, let me hope, will indefinitely continue.

The idealistic position involves no violence to any of the distinctions and assertions that common sense makes. Idealism only says that these objects do not exist outside our minds, that our own bodies exist only in our own or somebody's mind—in a word, that they are objects of experience, not realities outside experience, and that if there were no experiencing beings or selves, what they would be becomes a mystery, if indeed it has any sense to speak of them at all. What is a pain if there is nobody to feel it, what is a taste if there is nobody to taste it? Now just that is the whole perceptible world, including our own persons, if there is no subject that feels, perceives, experiences them.

Such is the idealistic view, and of it Schopenhauer is one of the most pronounced representatives. The whole matter is so clear to him that he hardly argues about it. "For-saken of all the gods," he says in the Dissertation,¹ is one who imagines that the perceptible world standing there outside us is there without our contributing anything to it; and that then by means of bare sensation it finds its way into our heads, where it exists over again just as it does outside! A world outside consciousness—and then when consciousness arrives, a second world, entirely separate from it and yet like it to a hair!² It seems absurd to Schopenhauer.

I say he hardly argues about his idealism. It seems to him simply a matter of careful reflection and clear thinking (*Selbstbesinnung*). He follows Kant's searching analysis.³ He even goes further than Kant—or at least he holds to the Kant of the first edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, and chides him for making concessions to prejudice and so-called "common sense" in the second, saying that no one really understands Kant who knows only the second edition.⁴ *Kein Objekt ohne Subjekt* ("No object without a subject"), he declares. "The world is my idea" is another way of putting it. For to be an object in relation to a subject, to be an object of a subject, and to be an idea, are in essence the same thing, idea (*Vorstellung*) being used here simply to signify what is ideal or subjective in its nature as contrasted with something supposed to exist in itself. All our ideas, says Schopenhauer, are objects of the subject and all objects of the subject are really our ideas.⁵ Indeed, out of relation to a subject, Schopenhauer says, an object

¹ *Werke* (Frauenstädt ed.) Vol. I, "Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde," p. 80.

² *Werke*, III, 11.

³ *Werke*, I, "Ueber die vierfache Wurzel etc.," 32.

⁴ *Werke*, II, 515-516.

⁵ *Werke*, I, *op. cit.*, 27.

is *schlechthin Nichts*, "simply nothing"; when one leaves this relation out of account, nothing is left; the existence of the object in itself is an *Unding* (unmeaning) and vanishes.⁶ So he said in 1813; and thirty years later he declared with equal positiveness, "Never can there be an absolute and purely objective existence, for always and in the nature of the case an object has its existence in the consciousness of a subject and is really its idea."⁷

So far does Schopenhauer go in a feeling of this sort, that the world of objects becomes almost dreamlike to him. It is real to us, of course, as our dreams are while they last, but he speaks at times as if it were hardly more real. I say "almost" and "hardly" and speak with qualification at this point, for we shall soon see that Schopenhauer did not hold this dream-view absolutely. Here are instances of his two sets (divergent sets) of statement:

1. In one passage, after remarking that Kant's argument proves that things cannot exist independently as they appear to us, he says the similarity of such a world to a dream is manifest.⁸

Again, things in space and time have only "an apparent dreamlike existence."⁹ Still again there is, he says, a close relationship between life and dreams, and no definite line can be drawn between them.¹⁰ In this connection he finds the Indian sacred books suggestive, and frequently uses the Hindu expression, "veil of Maja" (illusion) for the world of perception, indicating thereby his feeling of its more or less illusory nature. He even says dreams and the objective world are leaves of one and the same book;¹¹ they are

* Cf. the passage from the first edition of the Dissertation, "Ueber die vierfache Wurzel etc." (Rudolstadt, 1813), p. 33, cited by J. Volkelt, *Arthur Schopenhauer* (3d ed., 1907), pp. 77-78.

⁷ *Werke*, III, 6.

⁸ *Werke*, I, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁹ *Werke*, II, 214.

¹⁰ *Werke*, II, 20-21. Cf. III, 4.

¹¹ *Werke*, II, 21.

poured out of one form (*aus einer Form gegossen*¹²); the function of the brain that calls forth the world of dreams has equal part in putting before us the world of actual objects.¹³ He confesses that sometimes, particularly in listening to music, his fancy plays with the thought that the lives of all men are only dreams of an eternal Spirit, bad dreams and good ones, and that death is an awakening—not our awakening, of course, but His.

2. And now the contrasted passages. In one, he remarks in general on our power of distinguishing the real connections of objects from fancied connections, and real objects from phantasms, and makes the significant statement that in sleep we can not do this, inasmuch as the brain is then isolated from the peripheral nervous system (the outer senses, that is) and does not receive impressions from without; hence dreams, where phantasms are taken for real objects because there are no real objects to compare them with—and only when we awake, Schopenhauer says, do we observe our error.¹⁴ In another passage Schopenhauer even argues that if the world were only an unsubstantial dream or a ghostlike castle in the air, it would not be worthy of our serious attention.¹⁵ Indeed, Schopenhauer's whole view of the world as ultimately will (which I can only refer to in this article) rests on the idea that what we call objects are not merely what we see, not merely these complexes of sensation that we can handle, arrange and causally connect, but that they have an inner being of a totally different character. No one imagines that dream trees or desks or persons have any such substantial being lying back of them—not even Schopenhauer. We are obliged to conclude then that his comparison of life to

¹² *Werke*, III, 4.

¹³ Compare this and other quotations in Volkelt, *op. cit.*, 84.

¹⁴ *Werke*, I, *op. cit.*, 89.

¹⁵ *Werke*, II, 118.

dreams must be taken with circumspection. The language he uses is approximate, literary, more or less emotional, rather than scientific. In a certain respect objects are like dreams—that is all he really means to say.

For all this Schopenhauer belongs primarily in the idealistic camp. Whatever may be the truth about objects ultimately, what we are accustomed to call objects, this vivid world we see and touch and hear and taste and smell, the objects next at hand and those in farthest space, those that last for a day and those that last for centuries, objects without us and our own bodies including our brains and the finest elements of which they are composed—all these are only our experience (or somebody's experience, or if not at any given moment experience then possible experience) and apart from experience absolutely, they lose all shadow of meaning—this is his view. I have said he does not argue about it, i. e., attempt to prove it. Yet certain considerations in its favor he does not fail to advance. For instance, it was customary among philosophers in his day to regard space and time as *a priori* forms of the mind rather than as self-existent realities, and Schopenhauer does likewise. All objects that appear in space and time (and practically all the objects we have been speaking of do) are hence so far subjective. Further, causality is to Schopenhauer *a priori* and subjective. So far then as objects are causally connected, they become still more subjective. Schopenhauer repeatedly argues that the world as we picture it in space and time and ordered according to the law of causality, cannot be independently real, for space and time and causality are only forms of our minds.

Another consideration he urges is that in our experience of the world we come on the inexplicable and inconceivable. For if our knowledge took hold of things as they exist in themselves, we should not encounter these mysteries—and the fact that we do proves that our knowledge

is of appearances not realities.¹⁶ Still another is that time of itself produces no physical effect—it is the mere form in which causes and effects succeed one another. The fact that it produces nothing, alters nothing, shows that it is a mere idea of the mind.¹⁷ Schopenhauer even uses the phenomena of clairvoyance, which in general he credited, as showing the non-reality of time and space. If the future were really separate from the present, and the distant from the here, the gulf could not be leaped between them.¹⁸ In these and other ways, convincing and unconvincing, Schopenhauer sought to give plausibility to his idealistic view.

But because idealist, is he absolute idealist? The absolute idealist says not only that the things we know are our experience, but that there are no things outside of experience (i. e., somebody's, human or non-human), that existence and experience (actual or possible) are equivalent, or at least strictly correlative, terms.

Schopenhauer uses language almost as sweeping; and yet puzzled as we may be, and as his commentators have been, I feel no hesitation in answering the question in summary fashion: Schopenhauer was not an absolute idealist. He does, indeed, object to Kant's way of getting at the independent realities—i. e., to his using the category of causality and conceiving them as the causes of our sensations¹⁹—but that there are independent realities he holds as firmly as Kant did. Schopenhauer is the antithesis of Hegel, and what is called post-Kantian philosophy generally—the antithesis of philosophers like Bradley and Royce to-day. They hold that things existing independently of a subject (some kind of a subject) are an absurdity; he, I might almost say, makes the supposition of independent, self-existing things the basis of his philosophy.

¹⁶ *Werke*, III, 217-218.

¹⁷ *Werke*, III, 341; VI, 41.

¹⁸ *Werke*, VI, 45; V, 280 f., 282 f., 321.

¹⁹ *Werke*, I, *op. cit.*, 81, 83; cf. II, 200, 499, and particularly 516-517.

Let me at once refer to passages. In one he says that objects in space and time exist only to a subject, because space and time are the forms of a subject; but these objects may have an existence in and for themselves, and for this they may require no subject.²⁰ In another passage he goes further and says that a perceived object must have some manner of existence in itself, for otherwise it would be merely another's idea and we should have an absolute idealism which in the end would be theoretic egoism and involve the falling away of all reality and the reduction of the world to a mere subjective phantasm.²¹ The customary name for theoretic egoism nowadays is "solipsism"—meaning, to put it popularly, that I exist (each one saying this for himself) and the world is my idea, and there is nothing beside; it might be called the theory of "I alone." Schopenhauer's point is that if things have no existence independent of us, if the world is merely our idea, then we do not get out of ourselves at all and we are unable to posit even the existence of other persons aside from their bodies.

No one has argued this with greater force than Edmund Montgomery, a writer well known to the readers of *The Monist*.²² Only on premises antagonistic to absolute idealism, only by supposing that things may exist whether we experience or think them or not, can we reach other minds than our own. Your mind does not exist because I think or perceive it, your feeling does not exist because I feel it—they exist in themselves, and would whether I or any one else had experience of them or not. If then I restrict myself to what I can experience, if this is all I call existence, and anything independent of my experience is an unreality, then you are an unreality to me in your inner

²⁰ *Werke*, III, 6.

²¹ *Werke*, III, 216.

²² See his *Philosophical Problems in the Light of Vital Organization* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1907), chapters V and VI of Part I, "The Epistemological Dilemma" and "The Epistemological Standpoint."

being, and we are all (supposing there is an "all") unrealities to one another. In other words, the refusal to credit the possibility of independent reality (i. e., absolute idealism) involves logically solipsism. This is Schopenhauer's contention. And he revolts against such a conclusion as little less than monstrous. Any one who soberly holds it he thinks would be a fit subject for a mad-house, and should be there not so much for argument as for a cure.²³

Still another passage. Granting, he says in substance, that the world as we see and experience it is our idea, we yet wish to know the significance of the idea. We ask if it is nothing more than idea (in which case it would be no better than an unsubstantial dream or a ghostly phantom and be unworthy of our attention), or, if it is not something else, something in addition, and if so, what.²⁴ In the same vein is the remark that if phenomena are not to be empty phantoms, but to have a meaning, then they must point to something, be the expression of something that is not, as they are, merely an idea for a subject, and so dependent on a subject, but an independent reality.²⁵ Moreover, Schopenhauer felt, as already indicated, that there is something strange and inexplicable in the phenomena of the world. The specific nature and manner of working of each particular thing (or at least class of things) is mysterious; we can only discover the conditions under which a thing acts in the peculiar manner it does—the time, the place, the antecedent circumstances—but the ultimate why of the action is undiscoverable.²⁶ It is so with human beings. The motives operating on a man do not explain his act till we know what sort of a man he is; and this, his original disposition or character,

²³ *Werke*, II, 124. Cf. Volkelt's paragraph on the subject, *op. cit.*, 158.

²⁴ *Werke*, II, 118.

²⁵ *Werke*, II, 142.

²⁶ Cf. my article on "Schopenhauer's Contact with Pragmatism" in the *Philosophical Review*, March 1910, pp. 149-150.

is a mere datum or brute fact. Things *are* so and so, and no reasons, ultimately, can be given for them. This unaccountability and unfathomability of the world, its purely empirical character, was to Schopenhauer proof that in it we have something more than merely mental phenomena which as products of the subject would sooner or later be intelligible to the subject just as are those other unquestioned products, the forms of space and time.²⁷

Once he makes a formal set statement, and I will not paraphrase but literally translate it: "A thing-in-itself signifies something present that is independent of our perception and hence that really exists. To Democritus this was formed matter; in principle it was the same to Locke; to Kant it was *x*; to me will."²⁸ He adds, every being (*Wesen*) in nature is both phenomenon and a thing-in-itself²⁹—i. e., exists in relation to a subject and also independently. Anything more precise and definite could hardly be desired. In the last analysis Schopenhauer is a realist of the most positive type.

How then can we reconcile the opposite poles of Schopenhauer's thought? "No object without a subject," he at first affirms; and now, "There are things independent of a subject." Is it a contradiction? So some critics assert, for instance Ueberweg,³⁰—even some not unfriendly ones, including Volkelt who has written perhaps the best book on Schopenhauer.³¹ Nor can we ease our minds by saying that consistency is not necessary. Emerson called the demand for consistency the hobgoblin of little minds; but while

²⁷ *Werke*, III, 217-218; cf. II, 116 f., 129, 144 ff., 161 ff.; IV, "Die beiden Grundprobleme etc.," 46 f. See Volkelt's admirable statement, *op. cit.*, 158-160.

²⁸ *Werke*, VI, 96.

²⁹ *Werke*, VI, 97.

³⁰ *Geschichte der Philosophie* (4th ed.), III, 285 and 290 n. Ueberweg says that Schopenhauer by his sweeping assertion, *Kein Objekt ohne Subjekt*, denies the *Transcendentales Objekt* or *Ding an sich*, which Kant allowed.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, 155-156. Cf. Hartmann, *Gesammelte Studien und Aufsätze* (Berlin, 1876), 637 f., 640 f.; Thilo, *Ueber Schopenhauers ethischen Atheismus*, 15 ff.; Möbius, *Ueber Schopenhauer*, 57-59.

this may possibly do for the literary man or the prophet, it will not do for the philosopher. If he really contradicts himself, it is fatal to him, and Schopenhauer recognizes this. Though he once remarked that pointing out contradictions is the commonest and most notorious way of refuting an author,³² and though in contrast with Kant, so scrupulous or even pedantic in his qualifications and refinements, he philosophized as Volkelt has said in a royally careless and straight up and down manner,³³ he would have been the first to admit that if one said a thing and then denied it in the same sense, it was the end of him as a thinker. In interpreting Schopenhauer we have to have a little largeness of mind and sympathy, and not be tied down by words.

The key to the understanding of his apparently inconsistent view on this subject lies, I am persuaded, in a double use of the term "objects." Sometimes he uses this term loosely and popularly, as we all do; at other times he uses it strictly and scientifically.³⁴ In one sense anything is an object that we can talk about at all—a desk, a tree, a natural force, an ego, an angel, a God, the inhabitants of Mars, things we know and things we do not know; in short all sorts of things mixed up together. In another sense an object is something that we can put clearly and definitely before the mind—of which we can say, There it is, look at it; see its form and outline, notice its characteristics, a clear, distinct, recognizable, almost sensible thing. Now many objects in the broad vague sense are not objects in the special and more precise sense. Try to think of a natural force, for instance—have you any clear picture before you? Try to think of an ego or subject—can you

³² Grisebach, *Schopenhauers Briefe*, 135.

³³ Volkelt, *op. cit.*, 64.

³⁴ Cf. language about the "Begriff Objekt im eigentlichsten Sinn," "der Leib selbst nicht eigentlich als Objekt," "jede Erkenntniss eines eigentlichen Objekts," (*Werke*, II, 23). Schopenhauer recognizes the obligation of philosophy "in allem was sie sagt, *sensu stricto et proprio* wahr zu sein"; it goes without saying however that he often uses words loosely.

distinctly conceive of it? Try to think of the inhabitants of Mars—have you any real idea of them at all? In other words, many things we talk about we find are really quite hazy to us, and this comes pretty near to saying that they are not objects at all; they are surmises, vague ideas, and yet with more or less assurance (according to the particular case) we may say they have something of reality attached to them. They are not quite nothing, though we cannot picture them or make a recognizable object out of them.

Now on analysis we find that the things that do become real objects to us are chiefly (I do not say, exclusively) of one class. They are the things made up out of our sensations—the desks, trees, rivers and lakes, the moon and stars, our bodies and so on. We can picture them most definitely. We may believe in the existence of other things or even be most sure about them—as, for example, that there is more to us than our bodies, or that another person is now experiencing a pleasure, or that an animal is running away in fear; and yet when we try to put clearly before us that other more which we are, or make a distinct object of that pleasure or fear, we find that they more or less elude us and we say perhaps we cannot make definite objects of them though we know they are real. That is, the only things that do become distinct objects to us are the direct objects of our experience. We see and feel color, hardness, weight, i. e., the material or physical world stretching out before us and above us, but we do not see another person's thought or feel another person's feeling; we do not even see our own thought or have a sensible experience of our own inner being and so we cannot even picture ourselves, not to say others, as we can outer things. It turns out thus that the objects that are distinct, and genuinely objects are physical or sensible objects. It is our height of praise, is it not, to say that something is as plain

as day, or as evident as the nose on your face. And yet these physical or sensible objects, being made up of sensations as they are, are strictly inconceivable apart from a sentient subject, being indeed simply the experiences of that subject.

Now if we bear all this in mind, I think we have the key to Schopenhauer's real view. When he says, "No object without a subject," he means no object that is really an object; i. e., that is distinct, that has any clear marks by which it may be known and recognized; for all such objects, according to the matter-of-fact constitution of the human mind, are sensible objects, experiences by the mind of its own sensations, worked over, classified and connected according to its own categories. But when on the other hand he speaks of objects existing independently of a subject, as he is most certain that there are, he uses the term "objects" in the other loose, vague, popular sense in which anything is an object that may be spoken of at all. When he wants to be precise, he even says distinctly that these objects should not be called "objects" and he chides Kant for speaking of things-in-themselves as objects.³⁵ "Objects" in this precise sense are only objects of knowledge, things that stand out clearly before us, and the only or at least chief things that do this are matters of sensible experience, things that have no meaning or existence apart from an experiencing subject; but things that stand dimly in the background, things we cannot make out, things that cannot be classified and named, or, if so, are little more than names—these are not objects and can only be called such owing to our loose and inaccurate habits of speech.

It is true then that the whole world of our positive definite knowledge, made up, or built up out of our sensible experiences as it is, has no existence apart from ourselves;

³⁵ *Werke*, II, 206; cf. II, 131, "Dieses Ding an sich . . . , welches als solches nimmermehr Objekt ist, etc." Also II, 143.

but this is not inconsistent with the admission that something lying back of this world and hinted at by it, may exist quite independently of ourselves—only it is not an object or objects in any intelligible sense of that word. Hence, “No object without a subject” is true. “There may be things existing independently of a subject” is also true. The desk as such, the tree as such, the moon and stars as such, i. e., these groups of sensible qualities, light, color, and so on, that we immediately experience, would not exist were we, or some beings like us, not here; but something lying back of these qualities, something they point to, something they signalize,³⁶ may exist and exist just as truly when we are not here as when we are. This something, or rather these somethings, may be vague and indefinable; they may be no objects, and yet they may be real; they may even be more real than the sensible qualities in which they express themselves to us. For these sensible qualities come and go; they are while we perceive them, and when we do not perceive them they are not, while the things themselves may have a perduring existence. And it may be added that a dream differs from a reality in this, that a dream is a set of sensations that “signalize” nothing beyond them, while a reality is a set of sensations that point to something, are an expression or revelation of something. Both are subjective in one sense of the term, for neither dream objects nor real objects can exist without a subject to experience them (hence Schopenhauer’s comparison); but the dream object has nothing behind it and the real object has. Or more briefly, the world, our actual world, is a dream and has no self-existence; but it is a dream that means something, and *that* is not a dream.

An idealist then as to all this world of our knowledge; but a realist in the sense of holding to a sphere of existence beyond the bounds of positive knowledge—that is what

³⁶ This is a term of Edmund Montgomery’s.

Schopenhauer seems to me to be. Knowledge, he virtually says with a great English poet,

"Knowledge is of things we see."

for the *a priori* forms of knowledge which he recognizes are formal merely, and give us no concrete content. Knowledge is built up out of sensation—there is no other. All our conceptions and judgments and reasonings have no other ultimate material on which to work or out of which to build. And yet there may be things other than those we see, and the very seen and seeable things may mean something, may indicate, point to something, and this something be more real than anything we know. What that something may be conjectured to be, is a question that lies beyond the limits of the present article.

Before closing, however, I may be allowed to say a word as to an unconsidered factor, a "sleeping partner" in our problem. We have been considering objects, but what about the subject that knows objects, i. e., what about our veritable selves? To some it may seem as if we know ourselves, even if we do not know anything else. Have we not a little world of our own, or at least each his little world, made up of our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, our aspirations, our inner efforts and decisions, that in contrast to the world without, we know perfectly? Schopenhauer, strange to say, doubts it. He is more or less dubious about a so-called special science of psychology.³⁷ He thinks a clear vision of our inner life is hard to get. The mind is of such a nature that it looks without more easily than within. It is like a telescope, he says. Look out through it and all is light and clear; try to look down within it, and all is dark. Nothing *a priori* illuminates that night; our watch-towers throw all their rays outwards.³⁸

Let us restrict our consideration here to the knowing

³⁷ Cf., e. g., VI, 20; also Frauenstädt's *Memorabilien*, 562, quoted in R. Lehmann's *Schopenhauer*, 171 n.

³⁸ *Werke*, IV, "Die beiden Grundprobleme, etc." 22.

side of our nature. We all are that—subjects that know. But for this there would be no knowledge, there would be no object. Schopenhauer affirms this. He says subject and object are not the outcome of knowledge, but the condition of all knowledge. The relation between them is a unique relation; it is not a relation of cause and effect, not one of reason and conclusion, not one covered by any of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason.³⁹ It is a relation, rather, that is the condition of the possibility of the principle of sufficient reason. This principle applies to objects and their relation to one another. The mind knows an object and seeks to explain it, but it does not seek to explain that which asks for an explanation nor the relation which it sustains to the object to be explained. In other words there is no explanation of the subject proper; it lies out of the region in which the principle of explanation applies. We simply *are* subjects—that is all we can say. We cannot go back of this primal datum. But even if we cannot explain, can we not know ourselves as subjects, it may be asked. Schopenhauer is dubious here too. To know ourselves as subjects, he virtually says, is to make an object of the subject, to put it there before us, to consider it, to observe it, to see what it is like. Schopenhauer says that this is just what we cannot do. We cannot turn back on ourselves and make an object of ourselves and look at it. That thing we make an object is, *ipso facto*, not the subject itself, but a mere idea, a mere imperfect hazy, logical product. The real subject is not there, but the very thing that is trying to make itself an object—and can't. If it could and became an object, it would be no longer subject. Indeed, if it became an object, who or what would see or perceive the object? It is that which sees, perceives, and thinks that is the subject, and it is forever a subject. Even if you could imagine yourself seeing it or thinking it, it

³⁹ *Werke*, II, 16.

would really be not what you saw or thought, but you yourself that were seeing or thinking. In brief, the subject that knows cannot be the object of knowledge. This is what Schopenhauer affirms in almost so many words.⁴⁰

Let me close with an incident from Schopenhauer's early Dresden days, when he was in travail with the ideas of his great work, *The World as Will and Idea*. His friend Frauenstädt narrates it, and says that at the time there was something so unusual in Schopenhauer's manner and bearing that one might almost have thought him out of his head. Once he was going around in the city hot-house and became quite lost in the contemplation of the physiognomy of the plants. Whence came, he was asking himself, their so different coloring and shapes? What would this growth say to him in its form, so individual and peculiar? What is the inner subjective being, the central will, that here in these leaves and these blossoms is coming to expression? He perhaps spoke aloud to himself, and in this way as also by his gesticulations attracted the attention of the keeper of the hot-house. The keeper was curious as to who this extraordinary man might be, and asked him the question as he was going away. Schopenhauer replied, "Yes, now, if you could tell me who I am, I should owe you many thanks." And the keeper looked at him, as if he had a crazy man before him. It was a bit of humor, Schopenhauer remarked to Frauenstädt.⁴¹

"If you could tell me who I am!" Doubtless Schopenhauer had in mind the general puzzle of the human personality, but perhaps my readers will grant that what this subject is that is never object, is a part of the puzzle.

WILLIAM MACKINTIRE SALTER.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Werke*, I, "Ueber die vierfache Wurzel etc.," 141; II, 5-6; III, 18.

⁴¹ This incident as narrated by Frauenstädt is given in Möbius, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 55-56.